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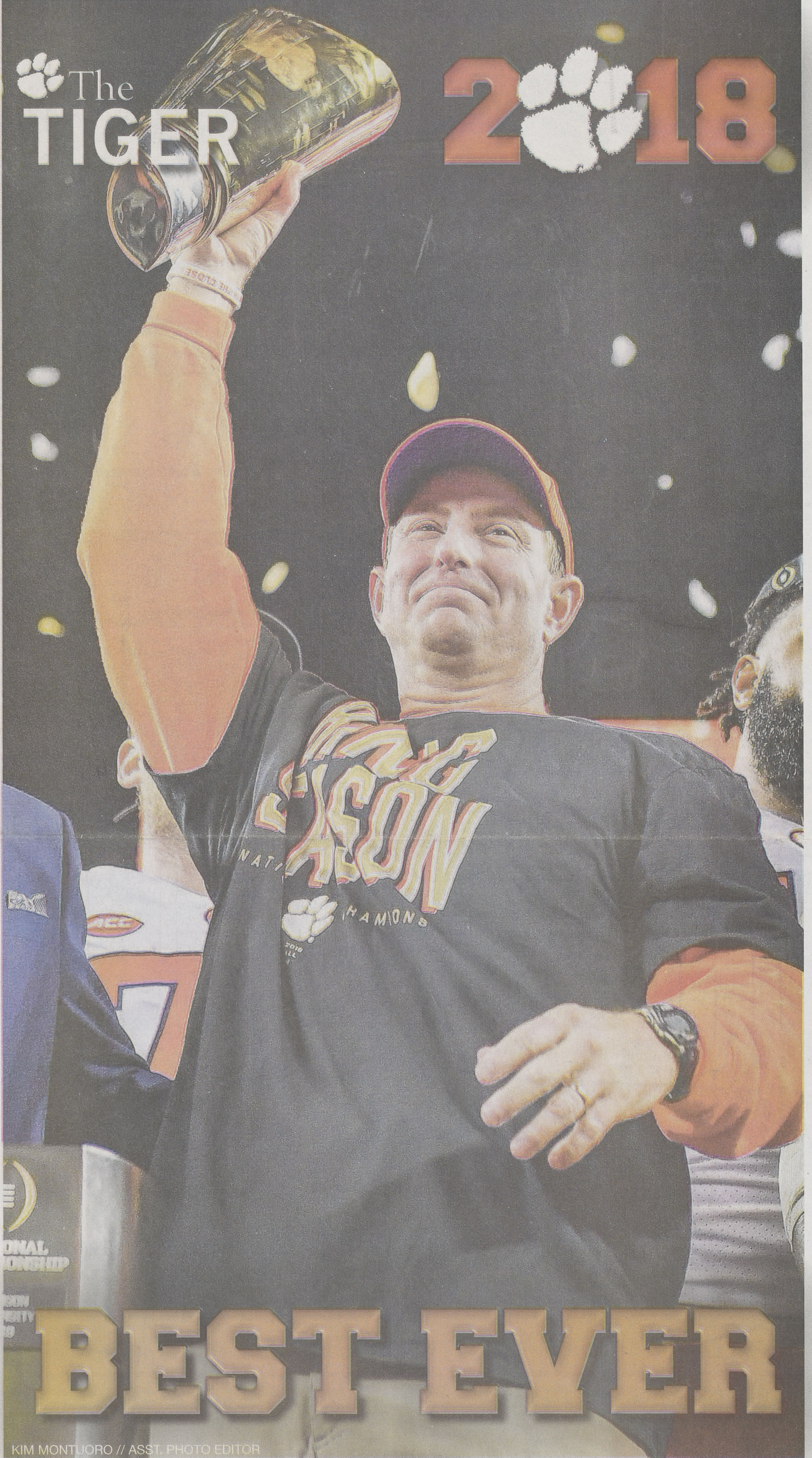
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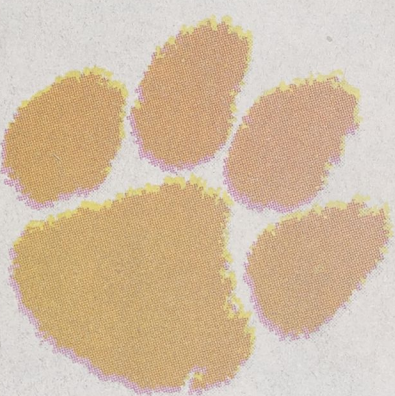


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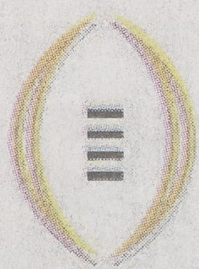
2018



KIM MONTUORO // ASST. PHOTO EDITOR



44



NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIP
BAY AREA 2019

16



DAVID PEREZ // PHOTO EDITOR

CLEMSON RETROSPECTIVE

Clayton Crowley, Sports Editor

I was fortunate enough to be in Clemson last weekend, with my friends at a bar downtown as we watched Clemson play in the 2018 National Championship. Right around the middle of the third quarter, when Clemson was really laying it on thick and erasing any hope of an Alabama comeback, my friend turned to me and said, "Is it just me, or does this feel just as special as the 2016 Natty?"

2016 gave the Tigers a chance to avenge a recent loss and send Clemson legends like Deshaun Watson, Mike Williams, Artavis Scott and Ben Boulware out with a championship in their senior year. The game was as dramatic as could be, coming down to a literal last-second touchdown pass to Hunter Renfrow that gave the Tigers the win and secured Clemson's first national championship since 1981.

We felt beyond blessed. To go to school at a time when the football team wins a championship is a remarkable coincidence and provides an unforgettable experience. For the rest of your life,

you can say, "I was there" whenever someone brings the Clemson football dynasty. Clemson hadn't won it all in 35 years and it could have been another 35 years before they won another as far as anyone knew.

As we watched the minutes tick by last weekend, slowly counting down the seconds until we were able to parade through the streets, hugging and high-fiving strangers and screaming, "TIGS ON TOP" at cars passing by, many of us tried to fit this victory and this season into the bigger picture, both in terms of Clemson and in terms of the college football world as a whole.

Entering the season as the number two team in the country, Clemson made headlines for its dueling quarterback position. The incumbent Kelly Bryant started the first four games and played as well as nearly any other quarterback in the country while rookie phenom Trevor Lawrence dazzled on nearly every offensive drive he helmed.

As the games went on and Lawrence continued to impress, though, his talent became impossible to ignore. He eventually

usurped Bryant's position as starter and spurred Bryant's decision to transfer to Missouri. Regardless of what some may think about how Bryant handled the decision, he deserves a massive amount of credit for this championship.

Can you think of a harder position for a quarterback to be in? He waited patiently on the sidelines for two years and had to follow up the best quarterback in Clemson history and a national championship. That's like going to your regular bar to make your debut playing the guitar, but Jimi Hendrix is your opening act.

Not only did Bryant keep Clemson relevant, but he excelled far beyond expectations in a season that some thought would be transitional. And then all of a sudden, he has to fight for the starting job against a true freshman, a notion that seems ridiculous until you realize that the freshman just so happens to be a once-in-a-generation quarterback talent.

Regardless, Lawrence took the starting job and ran with it, demolishing just about every freshman

quarterback record that Clemson keeps track of. He showed off the kind of talent that has NFL teams with top picks in the upcoming draft wishing they could draft him right now.

By the end of the season, he had thrown for more yards in one season than any Clemson quarterback not named Watson, Boyd or Whitehurst.

By the time the playoffs rolled around, it was clear that Alabama and Clemson were on a collision-course. Both with undefeated records, star-studded rosters and a killer instinct, the two were in a class of their own.

Which is why this championship is so unbelievable and why it feels like this is the beginning of something new.

In a way, when the Tigers won in 2016, it felt like the peak of something. Despite the fact that we had the best quarterback in the history of the school and an all-time defense, Clemson was barely able to scrape out a win against the reigning college football powerhouse. It felt like we were the plucky underdogs who defied

the odds and won it by the skin of our teeth, Rocky-style.

And while this game wasn't nearly as dramatic thanks to yet another matchup with Alabama and a blowout to boot, every Tiger fan had to feel like this was a landmark game.

The game was so convincingly one-sided that it really seems like Clemson might be the new standard in college football, and it put this team in the record books as one of the best of all time.

The 44-16 smackdown marks the largest margin of defeat in Nick Saban's illustrious career as a head coach and marked the first time since 1897 that a team has gone 15-0. With the win, the seniors of the football team like Christian Wilkins and Renfrow became one of the winningest classes ever with 55 wins and just four losses.

Clemson toppled Alabama - the immortal college football monolith - in a way that shook the country from Santa Clara all the way to the Southland.

Nothing is certain--especially in sports. Yes, the Tigers have won two

championships in three years and look poised to capitalize on their success, but it might be another 35 before they win another. You never know.

So whether you're a senior and you get to go out on top, a freshman who feels like they got here just in time to be a part of something truly exceptional, a graduate who will always root for their alma mater, a fan who's followed the team for as long as they can remember or a parent or family member who roots for the team because their child wanted to be a Tiger:

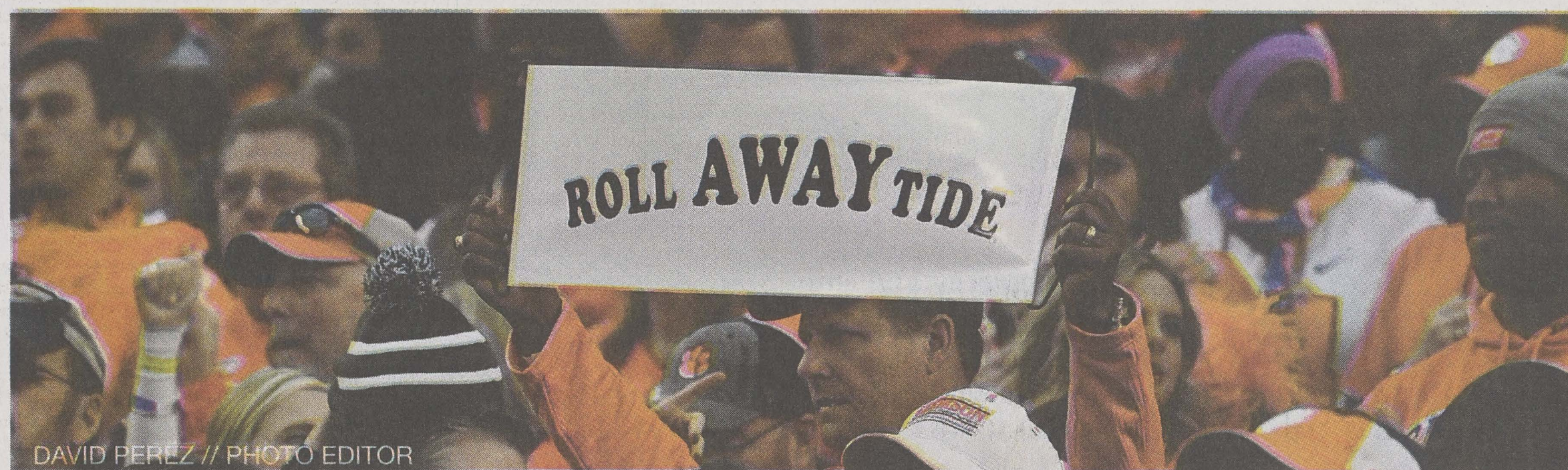
Celebrate. Because this one was special.



KIM MONDORO // ASST. PHOTO EDITOR



DAVID PEREZ // PHOTO EDITOR



DAVID PEREZ // PHOTO EDITOR

FLAG FLIES OVER THE CAPITOL

Ashley Rhom, News Editor

Following the Clemson vs. Alabama National Championship game in Santa Clara, the South Carolina State House flew a Clemson flag above the building in commemoration of the victory. This tradition by the State House encompasses all South Carolina colleges and universities, and is a way to show recognition for teams that have won national titles.

Clemson, who is no stranger to the spotlight, was able to raise the Tiger Paw flag over the State House in Columbia for the second time in three years. The flag is only flown for a day, but it is a great day for the Clemson family.

Although the Tigers routed the Tide during the National Championship game, it is also worth mentioning that the Tigers routed the Gamecocks during the annual rivalry game...the same city flying our orange flag. Therefore, it is worth mentioning that we, the Tigers, carry this state on our back.



DAVID PEREZ // PHOTO EDITOR



KIM MONTUORO // ASST. PHOTO EDITOR

Dawson Green, Senior Sports Reporter

Clemson coaches and fans already know they will never see the best senior class in our school's history suit up again, but they are not the only players leaving us as some underclassmen will declare for the NFL draft. Some players have already declared while others could still declare until the Jan. 15 deadline. Christian Wilkins, Mitch Hyatt, Hunter Renfrow and Austin Bryant are just a few players that have no eligibility left and will

enter the draft. Entering along with them will be cornerback Trayvon Mullen, linebacker Tre Lamar, defensive tackle Dexter Lawrence and defensive end Clelin Ferrell.

Mullen is a 6-foot-2-inch defensive back and really improved his draft stock during the National Championship against Alabama. He tallied six solo tackles, a sack and an interception in the game to earn Defensive MVP honors. These stats are

in addition to his one interception, two sacks, three pass breakups, four tackles for loss and thirty-six total tackles during the regular season. Mullen is rated as a top three cornerback in the draft and a top 60 overall player. His draft projections range from top 15 pick to an early to mid second round selection.

Lamar is a 6-foot-4-inch inside linebacker. Lamar earned second team all-ACC this season.

Among Clemson's team leaders in tackles, Lamar tallied 80 total with 5.5 for loss, while also adding three sacks and an interception. His draft projections range from late first round to early third round as he is considered a top 10 inside linebacker. Lamar should be able to improve his draft stock during pre-draft workouts by proving his has more athleticism and lateral movement abilities than the scouts are saying he has.

Lawrence has also declared for the NFL draft after being suspended for the playoff semifinal and National Championship. As an all-ACC selection, Lawrence tallied 44 tackles, 7.5 for loss, three pass breakups, 1.5 sacks, a fumble recovery and a blocked kick. He also scored an offensive touchdown this season. He has largely been regarded as a top 10 pick; some even considered him as the number one overall selection this season. At 6 feet 4 inches and 300 pounds, Lawrence will be a force inside for any NFL team. Reports lately have seen his draft stock falling out of the top 15 for two reasons. Number one is the failed drug test, and the second reason is that the Clemson defense has played so well without him in the playoffs. "Big Dex" will be a first round pick, but how high is the only question there.

Ferrell declared for the draft with a heartfelt

letter to his teammates, coaches and all Clemson fans. Ferrell was named the ACC Defensive Player of the Year and also won the Hendricks Award, which is given to the top defensive end annually. He collected 54 tackles, 19.5 for loss and 11.5 sacks on the year. Many experts see Ferrell as a top five draft pick and he is a consensus top 10 pick. Ferrell should make a huge impact in the NFL because of his elite pass rushing ability. With Ferrell leaving for the draft, that means that all four of Clemson's starting defensive linemen will enter the draft.

There are a couple Tiger defenders still left to declare in Isaiah Simmons and Tanner Muse, who have both stated that they will discuss their draft future with family after the National Championship. Both of these players are projected third round or later draft picks, and it would most likely be beneficial for them to have another year in college. There is sure to be lots of turnover of the defensive side of the ball for Clemson, but as Dabo Swinney always says, "the best is yet to come."

SENIOR STAFF

REBECCA WEST
Editor-in-Chief
editor.thetigernews@gmail.com

NICOLE CLAMP
Associate Editor

NEWS
thetigernews1@gmail.com
ASHLEY RHOM
News Editor
CASSIDY TOM
News Layout Editor

OUTLOOK
opinions.thetigernews@gmail.com
JON WALSH
Outlook Editor
SAMANTHA CONNELL
Asst. Outlook Editor

SPORTS
sports.thetigernews@gmail.com
CLAYTON CROWLEY
Sports Editor
RYAN DONAHUE
Asst. Sports Editor
ALEX KELLY
Asst. Sports Editor
COLE LITTLE
Senior Sports Reporter
BRANDON STOCKDALE
Senior Sports Reporter
DAWSON GREEN
Senior Sports Reporter

TIMEOUT
tigertimeout@gmail.com
JOSEPH MESSIER
TimeOut Editor
KATE FREED
TimeOut Senior Staff Writer
JUDSON GREENE
TimeOut Senior Staff Writer

PHOTO
photo.thetigernews@gmail.com
DAVID PEREZ
Photo Editor
KIM MONTUORO
Asst. Photo Editor

COPY EDITING
copy.thetigernews@gmail.com
JULIA KORN
Copy Chief
KAMY THREATT
Copy Editor
MADDY WAGNER
Copy Editor
SYDNEY FORD
Copy Editor
AKIM KOUTSIKIS
Copy Editor

CREATIVE CONTENT TEAM
ANDREW JENNINGS
Creative Content Team Member

MARKETING, SALES AND DISTRIBUTION
tigerssquared@gmail.com

CONTACT US

MAIN OFFICE
315 Hendrix Student Center
Clemson University
Phone (864) 656-2150
PRINTER
Anderson Independent Mail,
Anderson, S.C.

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CHAMPIONSHIP ANALYSIS

Ryan Donahue, Asst. Sports Editor

In a battle between two college football heavyweights, the Clemson Tigers defeated the Alabama Crimson Tide in dominant fashion to win their second National Championship in three years. In the semifinal games, both teams left no doubt that they were the two best teams in the nation, winning their games by a combined 38 points. However, on Monday night, the Tigers were the ones leaving no doubt that they were the very best team, crushing the Tide by a score of 44-16.

In spite of objections from college football fans outside of Pickens County, S.C. and Tuscaloosa, Ala., Clemson vs. Alabama: Part Four proved to be extremely enticing early on. Just five minutes into the game, the score was already 14-7 in favor of the Tigers. Trying to take advantage of a blitz, Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa threw the ball into the flat toward star receiver Jerry Jeudy when cornerback A.J. Terrell came off his defender to intercept the pass and run it into the endzone to give the Tigers a 7-0 lead. While Tagovailoa finished the game with a solid statline of 22/34 and 295 yards, with two touchdowns and two interceptions, the Clemson defense made him uncomfortable all night long. Going into the game, it appeared as though Tagovailoa and his receiving core would have lots of opportunities against the inconsistent Clemson secondary. To the surprise of many, it was the interceptions by Terrell and Trayvon Mullen that were the difference in the first half.

The discomfort shown by Tagovailoa seemed to radiate through the Alabama sideline. Even Nick Saban, a man known for his unshakability and methodical coaching style, showed signs of panic. The Tide attempted six fourth-down plays, including

two inside the opposing 23-yard line and one on their own side of the 50. The most head scratching moment of the night was a fake field goal call that resulted in holder Mac Jones running straight into a brick wall of white jerseys. To make matters worse, it seemed as though every lapse in judgement was exploited by Dabo Swinney and the Tigers. The result was Alabama's worst loss in Saban's 12 year tenure as head coach.

Perhaps the biggest credit for Clemson's success against Alabama goes to Defensive Coordinator Brent Venables. Venables and the Clemson defense showed throughout the night that they were willing to give up yards, but they made plays in the areas that mattered most. Even without Dexter Lawrence, who announced his decision to enter the 2019 NFL draft on Wednesday, the defensive line still managed to shut down the Tide inside their own 25-yard line. Alabama clearly attacked the 350 pound hole in the defensive line, gashing the Tigers with runs up the middle all night long. However, the will of defensive linemen Christian Wilkins, Clelin Ferrell and Austin Bryant prevailed even with their backs against the wall.

Much like Tagovailoa in the 2017 National Championship, freshman quarterback Trevor Lawrence showed the world what he's capable of when the spotlight was brightest. Spectators were awed not only by the jaw dropping throws, but by the composure of a kid that celebrated his 19th birthday just four months ago. Saban's defense, loaded with future NFL players, looked like a high school defense at times on Monday night. Lawrence fearlessly took hit after hit in the pocket while still delivering bullets all over the field to 11 different receivers. The two most impressive pass catchers of the night were

sophomore Tee Higgins and freshman Justyn Ross. Higgins sparked the offense in the first quarter with a 62-yard catch and run. Later, he delivered the final blow on a lunging grab in the endzone. Ross followed up his 148-yard, two touchdown performance against Notre Dame with another 153 yards and a touchdown.

While the obvious difference between this year's 44-16 victory and last year's 24-6 defeat against Alabama was the play of Lawrence and Clemson's skill position players, the improved play of the offensive line may have had an even larger impact. While many point to former Clemson quarterback Kelly Bryant's underwhelming performance as the main reason for last year's loss, in many instances Bryant wasn't given an opportunity to make a play because of immense pressure from Alabama's defensive line. In this year's game, Clemson's offensive line, led by senior Mitch Hyatt, dominated Alabama's defensive line. By the time the 10:02 mark in the fourth quarter came around, the offensive line was able to lead a drive 94 yards down the field, slowly crushing any hopes of another Alabama miracle.

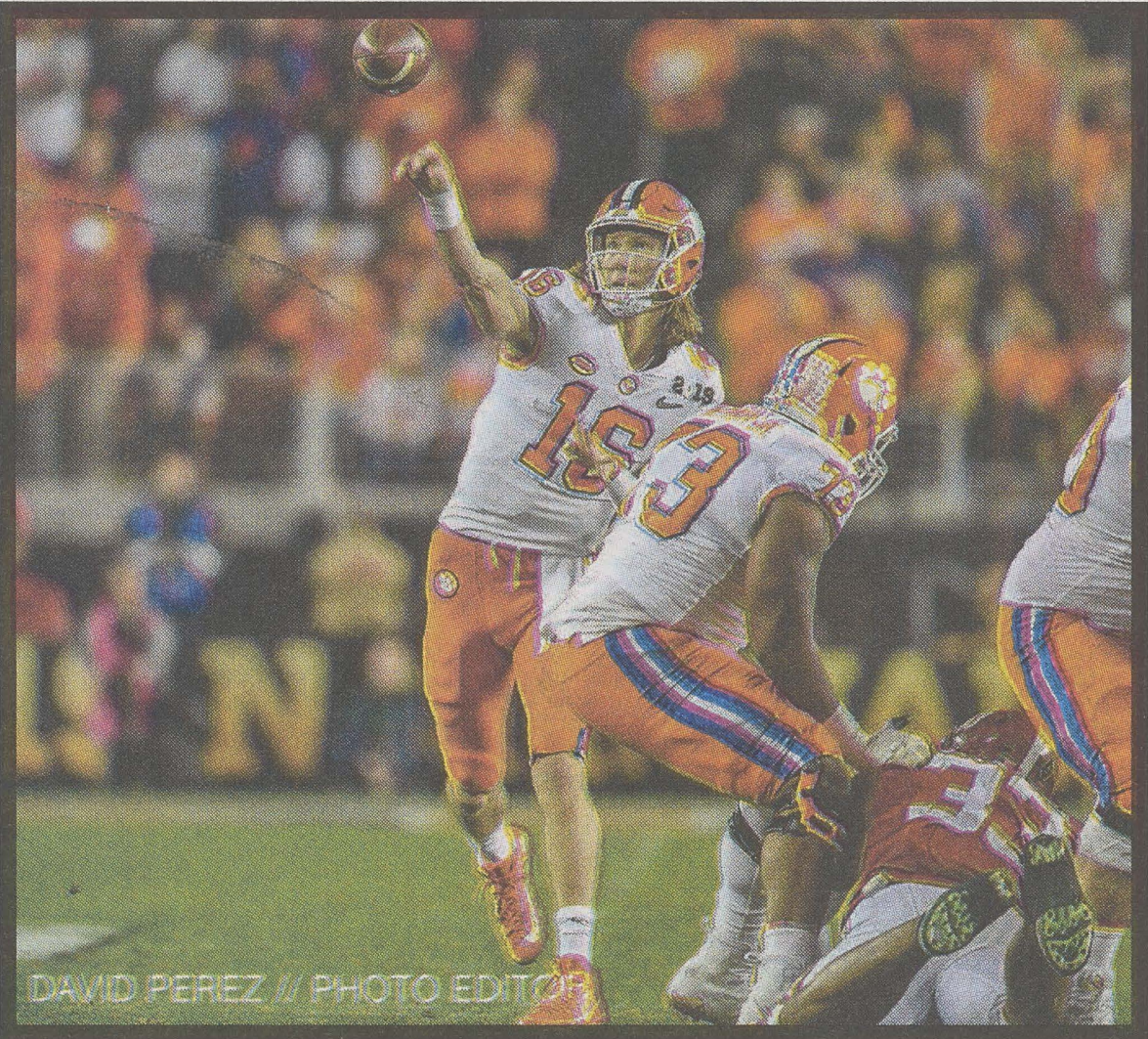
Arguably the unsung hero of the game was Clemson running back Travis Etienne. With all the focus on the blossoming of Lawrence, the developing rivalry between Swinney and Saban and the final game for much of the star-studded defensive line, Etienne quietly racked up another three touchdown performance. Etienne came into the game a much different RB than Alabama remembered from a year ago. While the elite speed and explosiveness are still there, Etienne's improved yards after contact ability proved difficult for the Tide to stop.

Beyond the implications for this year's season, a win

over Alabama proves that Clemson is, at the very least, on level playing field with the Tide. Not only did the 2018 Tigers defeat Alabama en route to their second National Championship in three years, their dominance was historic. They were the first undefeated College Football Playoff champions and the first team to finish 15-0 since the 1897 Penn State team who played without the benefit of pads or the forward pass. With the win, the senior classes for both Clemson and Alabama finished with records of 55-4 and two National Championships. The teams have also met four straight times in the College Football Playoff, splitting the games at two apiece. Clemson's 2016 Championship was treated as a mere scratch on Alabama's dynasty, however, what once seemed like a firm grip on the status of college football's "team to beat" has now loosened with this Clemson victory. Then again, Alabama is still Alabama and 2019 is a new year. This next year gives them a chance to play with a chip on their shoulder and a challenger to defeat. Clemson has proved to be the biggest threat to their throne since Saban's first title with the Tide in 2009. College football fans will eagerly await the 2019 season to see if the kings of the past decade can reclaim their throne. If not, it may be time to crown a new king.



KIM MONTUORO // ASST. PHOTO EDITOR

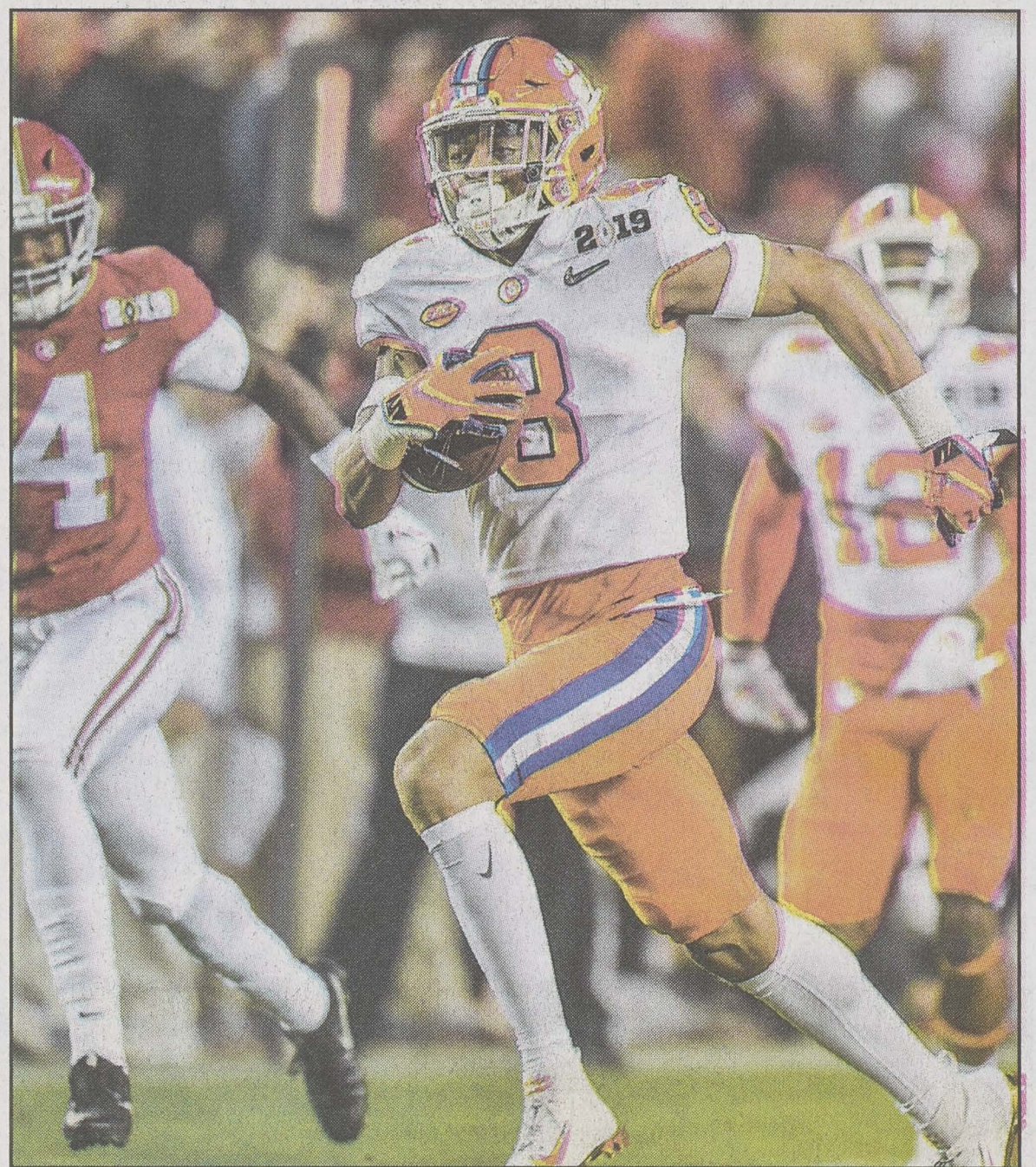
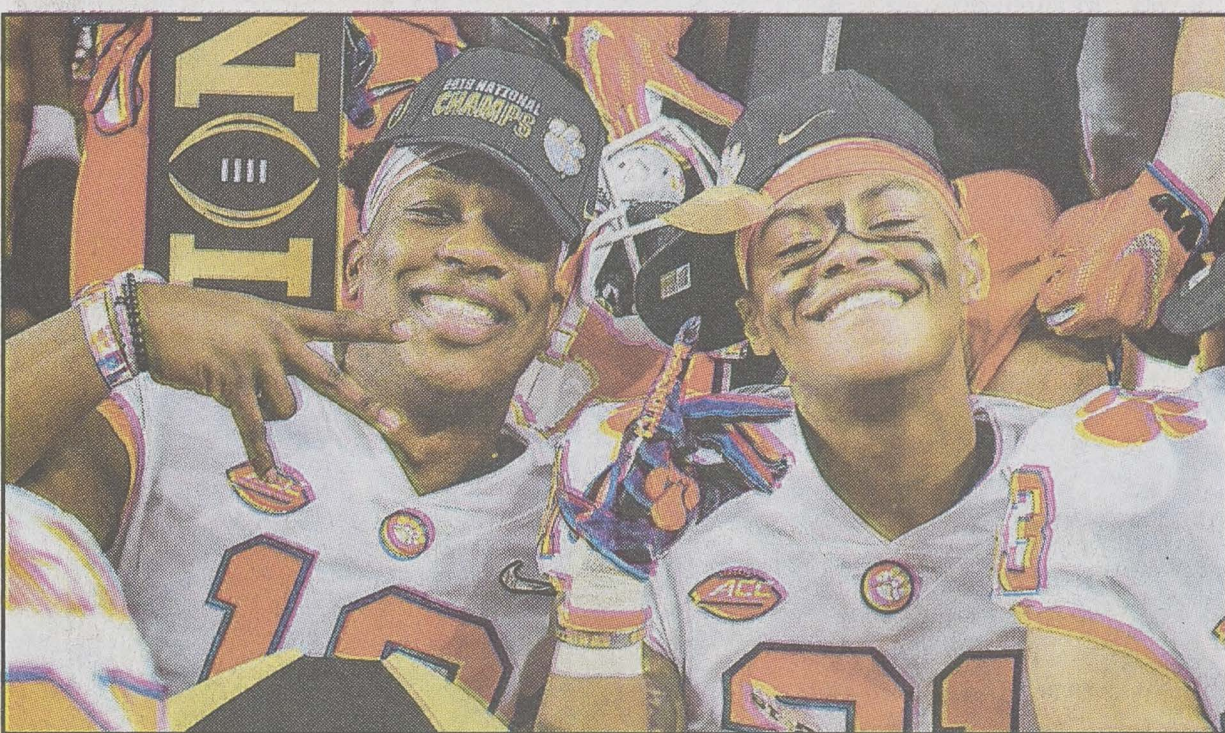
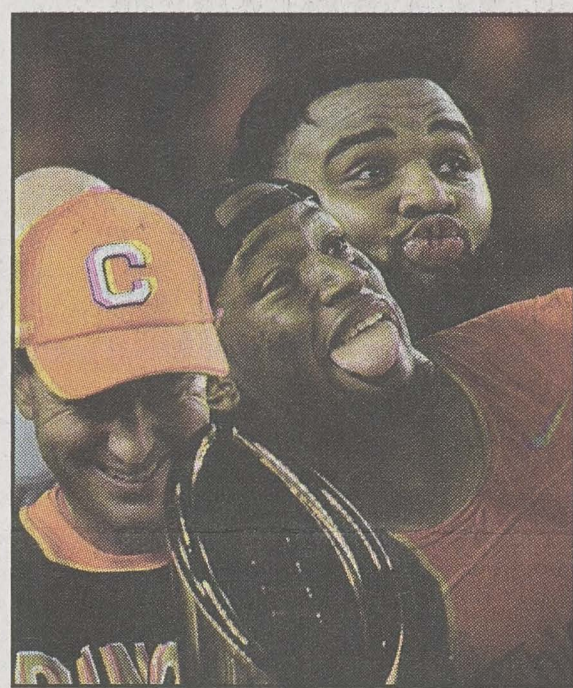
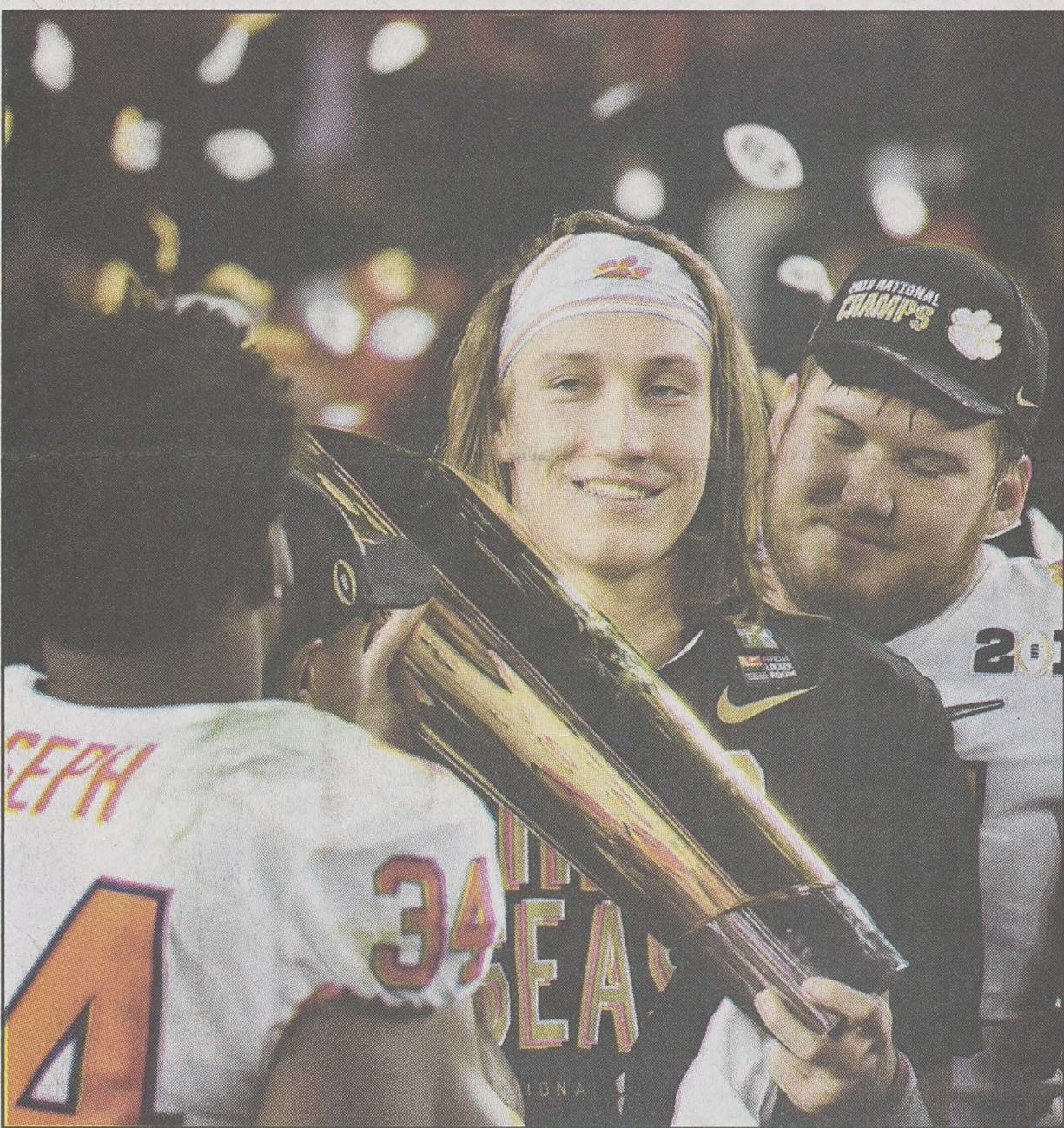
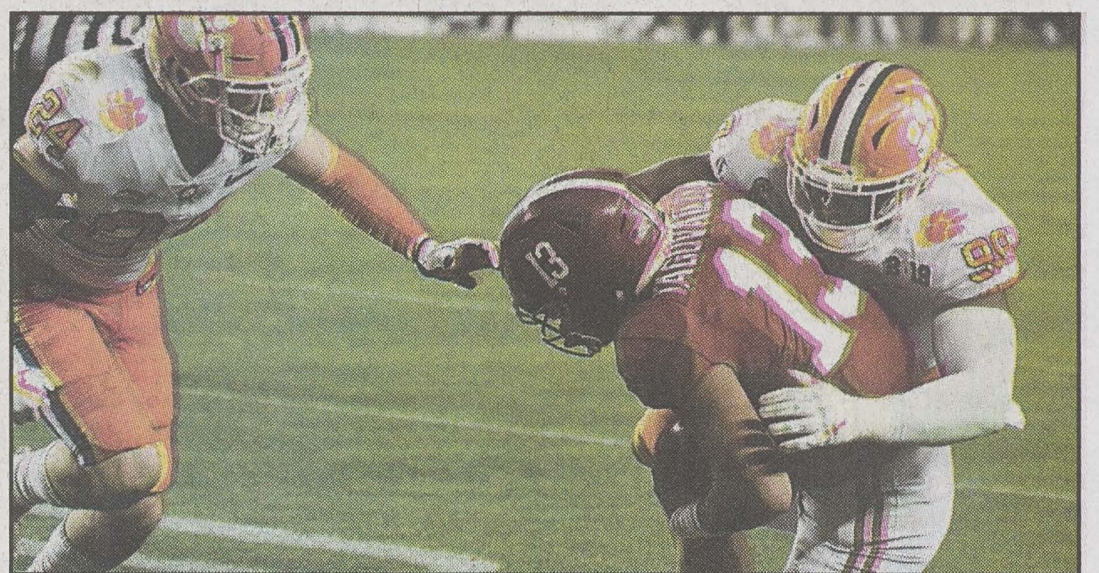
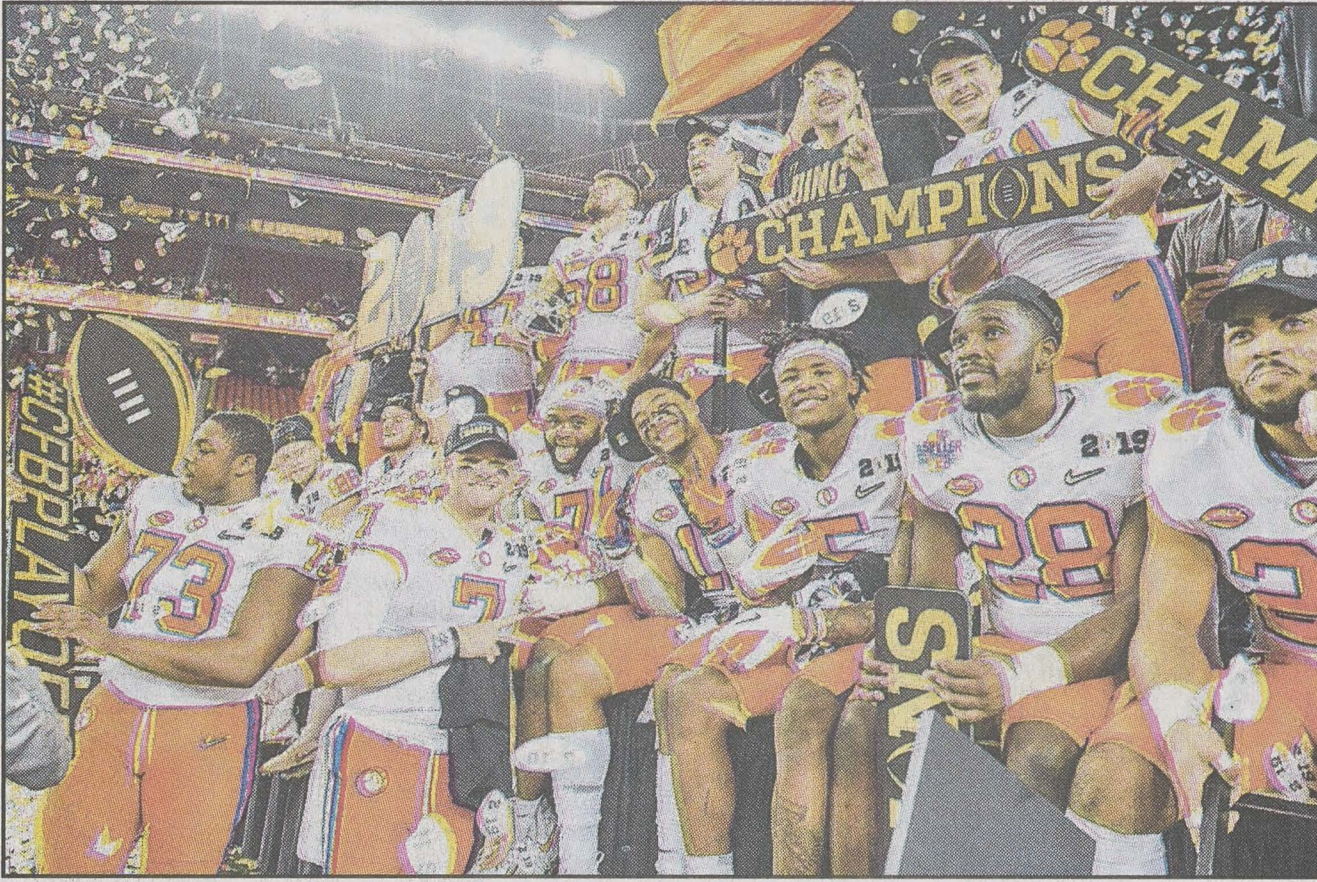


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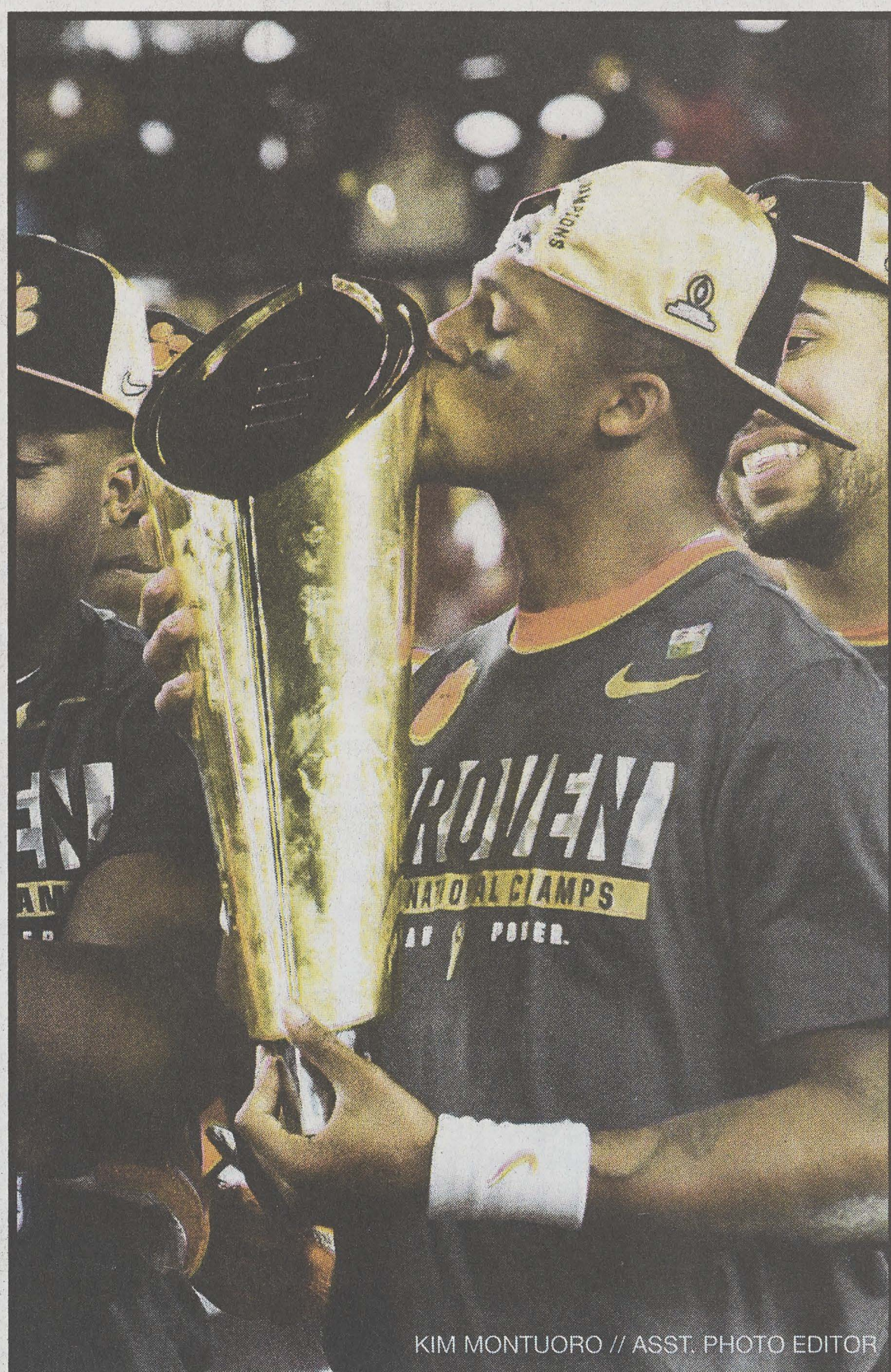
DAVID PEREZ // PHOTO EDITOR

PHOTO GALLERY



CREDIT: DAVID PEREZ AND KIM MONTUORO // PHOTO STAFF

2016 VS 2018



KIM MONTUORO // ASST. PHOTO EDITOR



KIM MONTUORO // ASST. PHOTO EDITOR

CONTINUITY OF STRENGTH FOR 2019 TIGERS

Alex Kelly, Asst. Sports Editor

YOUNG TIGERS SHINE

Monday night's National Championship was full of big plays with the majority of them coming from the No. 2 team in the nation, the Clemson Tigers. More specifically, those big plays came from freshmen and sophomores who will be returning to Death Valley for the 2019-20 season.

In under two minutes from the opening whistle, sophomore A.J. Terrell returned Tua Tagovailoa's third pass attempt of the game for a touchdown, giving Clemson the early lead. After Clemson's first offensive drive resulted in a three-and-out, their second series ended much different.

Freshman quarterback Trevor Lawrence was facing a third and 14 when he delivered a strike down the right side of the field to sophomore Tee Higgins for 62 yards to set up the Tigers at Alabama's 17-yard line. On the next play, sophomore Travis Etienne broke a few tackles on his way to the end zone. Although he was held in check for most of the first half, freshman Justyn Ross hauled in two catches for 24 yards on Clemson's last drive before the break. Ross was far from silent in the second half. After Alabama failed on a fake field goal attempt on the first drive of the second half, the Tigers only needed three plays to score. The first two plays only netted two yards, but Lawrence found Ross on a deep ball for 74 yards, and the Tigers stretched their lead to three touchdowns. On the next scoring drive, Ross had two highlight catches

both on third downs to keep the drive alive. To cap it off, Lawrence threaded the needle through three 'Bama defenders to Higgins from five yards out to give Clemson a four-touchdown lead. Neither team scored for the remainder of the game. After a year away from home, the College Football Playoff National Championship Trophy will return to Clemson, tucked away in the Allen N. Reeves Football Complex. The facility only opened three years ago and now holds two championship trophies. After the performances put on by the young guns in the big game, the future looks bright for the Tigers.

OVERLOOKED PERFORMANCE

Freshman kicker B.T. Potter only saw a few seconds of game time, but he might have made the biggest impact. Potter is the kickoff specialist for the Tigers but is not the primary placekicker. Potter had eight kickoffs but only one was returnable. The rest were touchbacks. In the 2015 College Football Playoff National Championship, Alabama's Kenyan Drake returned a kick 95 yards to the house, which was one of the key plays down the stretch that gave the Crimson Tide the title. They did not have a chance on Monday night to flip momentum on a kickoff. Potter will return to Death Valley next year and should take over the place kicking duties from Greg Huegel.

NEVER FORGET

The week after Kelly Bryant decided to

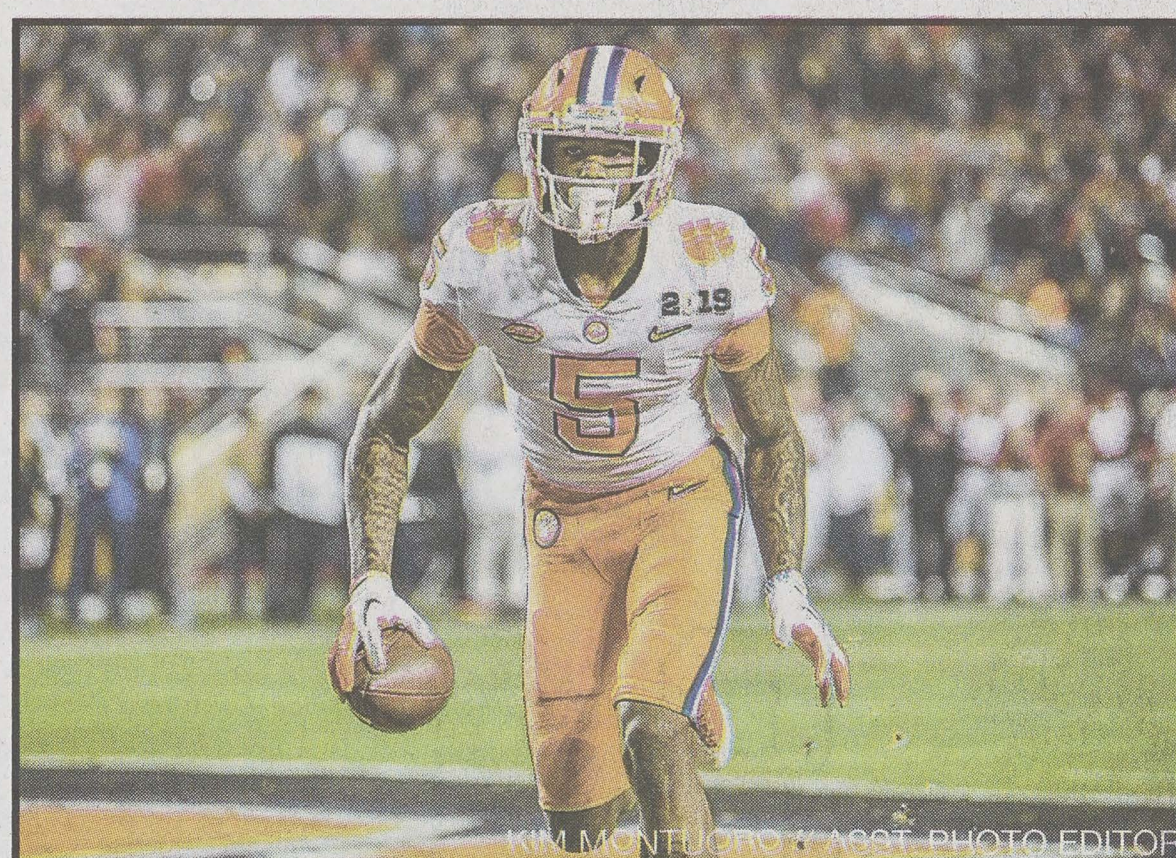
transfer from Clemson, freshman quarterback Chase Brice was thrown into the game against Syracuse after an injury sustained by Lawrence. Brice led the Tigers to a comeback victory, defined by the 94-yard drive that ended in a Etienne touchdown. During that drive, Brice converted a huge fourth and six on a pass to Higgins and later added on a 17-yard run. If Brice wasn't able to lead the Tigers to victory, they might not have even made the playoff.

PARTING WORDS

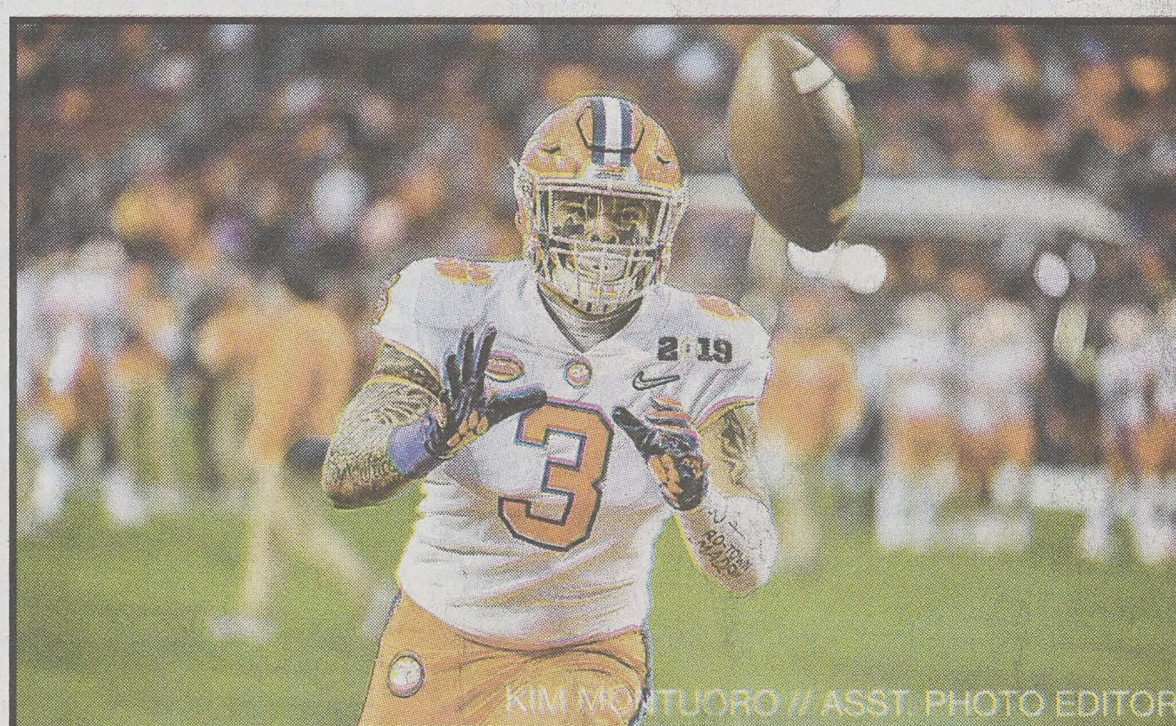
When ESPN's Maria Taylor asked him about how many future championships he plans on winning at Clemson, Lawrence answered, "probably three more, hopefully." This is not a farfetched claim from him considering every player highlighted in this article is an underclassman that will be returning next fall. Not even mentioned were freshmen edge rushers Xavier Thomas and K.J. Henry and sophomore receiver Amari Rodgers, who had almost 900 all-purpose yards and five touchdowns in 2018, including a 58-yard punt return in which he found paydirt against Boston College. According to ESPN, Thomas and Henry were both top-six recruits in the 2018 recruiting class. Joining the Tigers next year will be the sixth ranked recruiting class in the nation, claimed by 247Sports. Like Head Coach Dabo Swinney has said time and time again, the best is yet to come.



KIM MONTUORO // ASST. PHOTO EDITOR



KIM MONTUORO // ASST. PHOTO EDITOR



KIM MONTUORO // ASST. PHOTO EDITOR

BEST IN THE BUSINESS

Megan Kinner, Senior Sports Reporter

Dabo Swinney is responsible for creating Clemson football's unique "All In" culture. When he first got the head coaching job, Swinney said that he wanted to "build a model program" and that is exactly what he has done. His coaching style has resulted in much success and has made him the best coach in college football.

Some people will argue that Alabama's Nick Saban is superior; however, this 2018 season has pushed Swinney to the front. It is indisputable that Saban has reached legendary status for what he has accomplished at Alabama. But this year, Swinney showed that he is creating something legendary too. Clemson not only beat Alabama in the National Championship for the second time in three years, but they dominated the game in a 44-16 victory. Furthermore, the Tigers are the one and only team to beat the Crimson Tide in the Championship. The victory made Clemson the first team to have a 15-0 season with a National Championship win, and Clemson's senior class finished 55-4, tying Alabama's record for most wins by one class.

Swinney does not approach football in the same way as other successful coaches, such as Saban. In a recent interview with both Swinney and Saban, Swinney commented on a time when the two were vacationing on the same island.

"You got to kind of go through gates to get to his house, and any old redneck could pull up to my place," he said.

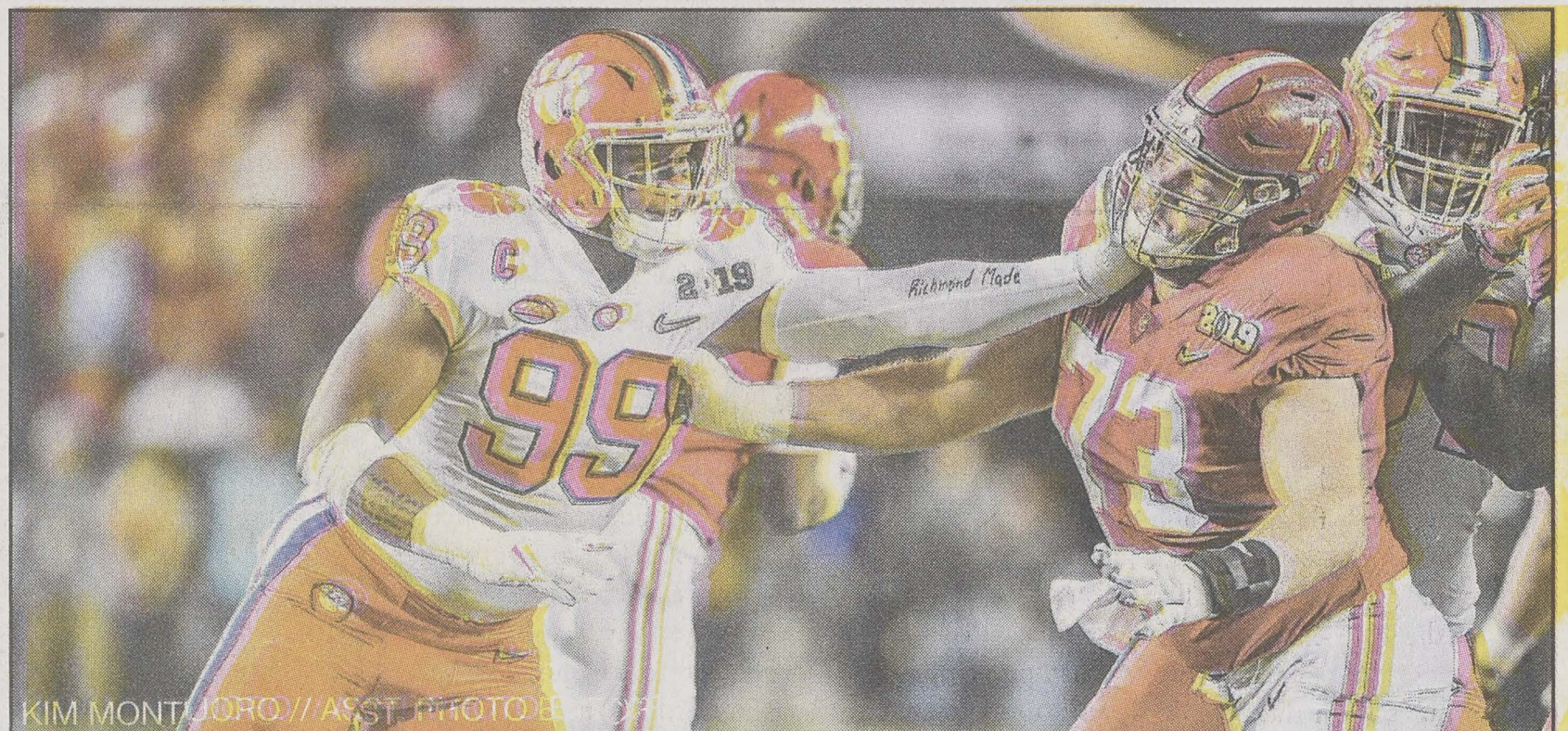
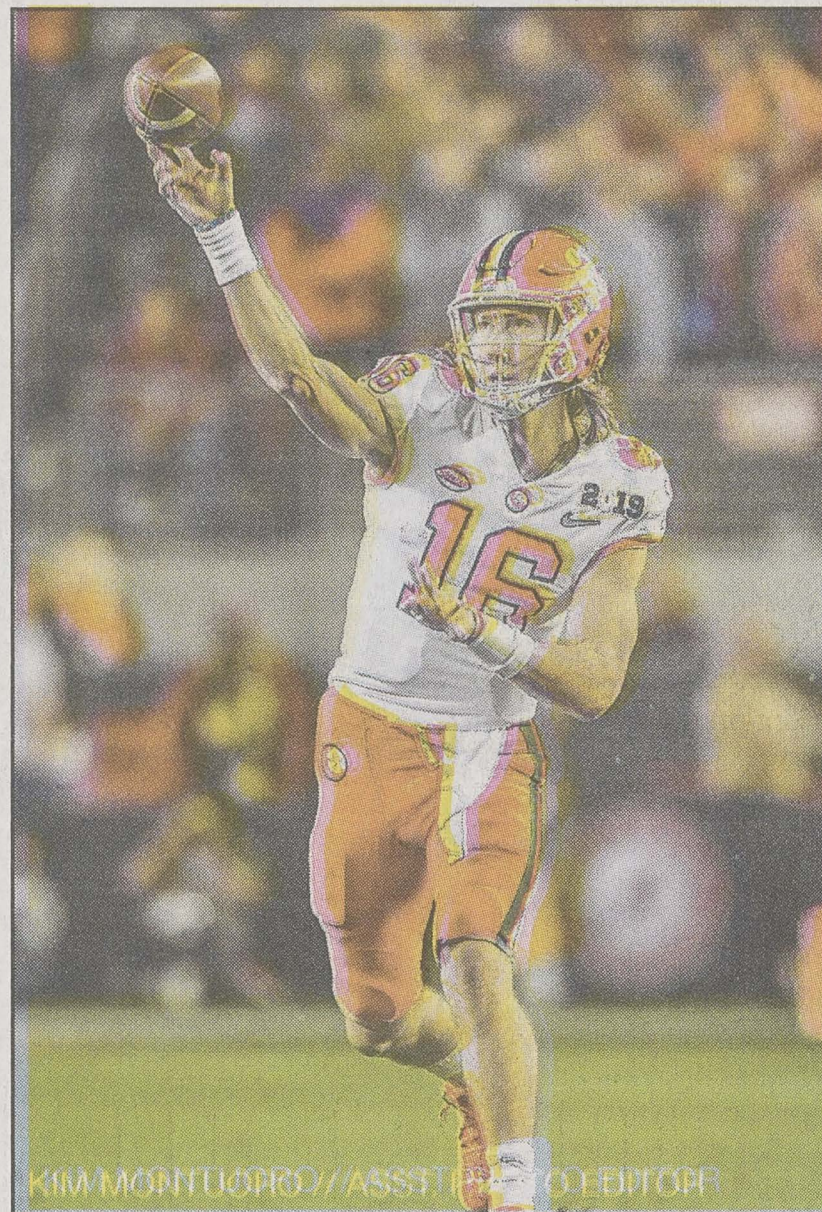
Even with all the success Swinney has had, he remains humble and relatable to many people. Thus, the culture of Clemson football is a unique one. One of the first things Swinney did as head coach was ask his players to be "all in", meaning to believe in themselves, each other and the coaches. In addition to getting his players "all in," Swinney also got the university to invest in them too. To do this, Swinney invited Clemson students to attend their practices and watch. Clemson's players and coaches love the atmosphere Swinney has created, resulting in many of them staying longer, rather than entering the NFL draft earlier or accepting other coaching offers. This has allowed the team to have experienced players, like Christian Wilkins, mentor lower classmen.

Young recruits are seeing Clemson's football culture and wanting to be a part of it. Justyn Ross, Alabama's best high school football player in 2017, gave insight about why he chose Clemson over Alabama.

"[Clemson's] culture that they have there and the family tight bond that everybody has...it's unbelievable and there is nothing like it," he said.

A big reason why Clemson football has that culture is because Swinney recruits good people who are good players. He will not recruit someone that is one or the other. Additionally, he does not care how many other offers a recruit is getting or what their ranking is because he knows what he is looking for. While every other big name school was offering Trevor Lawrence scholarships, Swinney did not because he did not want to offer one until Lawrence was older. Lawrence respected this, and it impressed him and his family. Swinney believes that "recruits and their families want and deserve to know who you are as a person, not just what kind of coach you are."

Before Swinney, Clemson had not won more than 10 games in a season in 28 years. Now within the last four years, they have had four playoff appearances and two National Championships. Swinney is a competitive guy, but he knows winning isn't everything. He recognizes that life is bigger than the game, and that the reason him and every player is there is because they love the game of football. Swinney loves his team and they love him. He has set the standard and has made Clemson the team to beat.



WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES

Branden Stockdale, Senior Sports Reporter

Jan. 1, 2018.

Clemson had walked off the field in New Orleans after falling to the Alabama Crimson Tide, 24-6 in a game where the offense struggled to establish a rhythm as the Tide forced two interceptions by Kelly Bryant in the second half, and Clemson's receivers had some critical drops that could have kept drives moving. All in all, it was just a bad night.

A freshman from Cartersville, Ga. enrolled at Clemson in January, ranked as the No. 1 recruit in the country by most recruiting services. The hype was through the roof for Trevor Lawrence, and it only got louder as Lawrence shined in the spring game, passing for 122 yards, including a 50-yard touchdown to Tee Higgins.

Zerrick Cooper and Hunter Johnson elected to transfer from Clemson, so the quarterback depth chart became smaller heading into the fall.

The fall approached.

Bryant started the first four games and Lawrence traded reps with the veteran until the Georgia Tech game, when it was a coming out party for the freshman. Lawrence threw four touchdowns. You know the story from there. Lawrence was named the starter the next week against Syracuse, and Bryant transferred to Missouri.

The game against Syracuse provided a nightmare scenario for Clemson fans. Lawrence was hurt on a scramble in the second quarter and Chase Brice was thrust into action. Brice's shining moment, and what is a core reason why Clemson just won their second national title in three years, was the 13-play, 94-yard drive that was capped off by a Travis Etienne touchdown to help Clemson win 27-23.

Lawrence returned the next week, and Clemson rolled on from there, averaging 47.4 points per game in the last 10 games. Dabo Swinney made the

move to Lawrence to enhance the downfield passing game, and it worked perfectly, but it was also for another reason. To get another shot at Alabama.

Clemson rolled over Notre Dame in the semifinal game in Dallas on Dec. 29, as Higgins made an acrobatic catch in the right corner of the endzone which effectively put the game away and sent Clemson fans booking flights to California.

Cue part four of Clemson-Bama. It's the championship matchup that many thought we would be see all the way back in August.

The first few drives indicated that the game might be a shootout, but Trayvon Mullen's third quarter interception shifted the momentum towards Clemson, and the Tigers rode that wave to a national title. It was the Lawrence and Justyn Ross show in the second half, as the duo that has been lethal all season could not be stopped by Alabama's vaunted defense, which had been giving up

less than an average of 21 points per game. Lawrence shined on the biggest stage, passing for 347 yards and three touchdowns as Clemson secured its second national title in three years.

What may go missing in the celebration of Clemson's win is the play of Clemson's offensive line. Clemson couldn't run the ball against Alabama last year, and while it wasn't totally dominant, the guys up front allowed zero sacks against Quinnen Williams and the Alabama defensive front.

On the other side of the ball, Defensive Coordinator Brent Venables had Clemson prepared for what Tua Tagovailoa was going to do for most of the evening. When this defense needed to create a stop, they got it, creating turnovers and confusing Tagovailoa at times.

From heartbreak one year to tears of joy the next. What a difference a year makes.



TIGER BAND SHAKES SANTA CLARA

Samantha Connell, Asst. Outlook Editor

For the second time in the past four years, The Song that Shakes the Southland rang throughout a stadium hosting the new national champions, the Clemson Tigers. Providing the tried and true melody that moves every Clemson student to their feet, “Tiger Rag,” was Tiger Band. The band accompanied the football team nearly 2700 miles to Santa Clara, bringing the university’s beloved song and spirit with them. If you weren’t in the crowd to watch Tiger Band during pregame or the halftime show, ESPN provided national coverage of their performance.

Tiger Band, a program that is home to Tiger Guard, Tiger Dancers and Tiger Twirlers, provided a unique experience to many Clemson students as they performed in Levi’s Stadium and on air. Jan. 7 resulted in the football team’s domination over Alabama, as well as an unforgettable halftime performance for Tiger Band.

Senior Production Studies in Performing Arts Major Trey Lockett, who has served as a drum major for Tiger Band over the past couple years, shared his view on the experience.

“Monday night was a very iconic defining night for Tiger Band,” he said. “It’s been cool to see

that just like the football team, some of the best days for Tiger Band have been over the past few years.”

While reminiscing on past marching and football seasons, Lockett provides positive remarks for Tiger Band’s Monday night appearance.

“On Monday night, just like our football team put on its best performance ever, so did Tiger Band,” Lockett said.

Luckily, ESPN decided to capture the band’s excellence with its SkyCam and featured them on ESPN Classic. Even if you left the room to grab a refill of your favorite football snack, it was hard to miss the great sounds coming from the band. If you were leaving the room for the first time since the beginning of an amazing game, you were probably cheering along to “Tiger Rag” as the band embarked on the field after concluding their halftime show.

Both the football team and band were put under a severe spotlight Monday night. Senior Psychology Major and Tiger Guard member Jessie Acosta recognized the nerve-racking feeling of being on live television.

“I felt a lot of pressure because it was a

broadcast that wouldn’t be edited afterwards, so the mistakes could’ve been seen by everyone,” Acosta said. “Personally, it was my best and final run, and I wouldn’t change anything about it.”

Both Acosta and Lockett seem to agree that, despite being nervous, the performance aired across America turned out to be one of the best runs Tiger Band has delivered. For Acosta, walking off the field to “Tiger Rag” and hearing “We Are The Champions” behind her after the game was bittersweet. Acosta, a fifth year Tiger Guard member, traveled with the band to the National Championship three separate times.

“Since it was my last game, on top of it being the National Championship, and that being the last time I would perform ‘Tiger Rag,’ I cried immediately after halftime ended,” she said, speaking of her incredible trip.

Acosta spoke of the memories associated with “We Are the Champions,” which left her emotional after the game.

“The first time I went to the Natty, we were playing Alabama in Arizona and we had to

practice that song, and I felt like we somehow jinxed it by practicing the song we play when we win, then losing,” Acosta said. “Playing it at my second National Championship, after losing the first and losing at the Sugar Bowl, that was amazing.”

Luckily, both Acosta and the audience were able to relish in the sweet sound of victory, provided by Tiger Band and accomplished by our incredible football team.

Although some Tiger Band members are leaving Clemson as part of a National Champion band, others still have a couple years to hopefully bring The Song that Shakes the Southland to another National Championship. If next season is anything like the one that just completed, Tiger Band can look forward to more opportunities to bring our sweet song and exciting halftime shows to your television or computer. If you find yourself missing “Tiger Rag,” you are sure to hear Clemson play it proudly on any recording of the unforgettable National Championship game.

UNSUNG HEROES

Ashley Rhom, News Editor

With a crowd twelve thousand strong, downtown Clemson was the place to be during the Natty. The Tigers’ absolute dominance over Alabama manifested in quite the scene. This scene, however, would not be quite as great without the support of our unsung heroes. Ross Davis, unsung hero and bartender at Loose Change, attested to the madness of the night.

“It was amazing to see all the people that came out, but I don’t get to watch the football game,” he said.

Ross, having worked downtown during both the 2015 and 2018 National Championship games, also confirmed that this year’s crowd was far more hype than anything he had previously witnessed.

“Even though it was not a home game, the turnout for the Natty this year felt just like a home game,” Ross said.

Maddie Lee, the general manager of 356 Sushi, shared similar views.

“I think the best part of [the night] would have been the people,” Lee said.

The gathering of people from all backgrounds is something that makes Clemson special, and Monday night was no exception.

“You have kids who are two weeks old, 10-year-olds and even those who are well into their 80s out here, and to have everyone be a family is something that is so fun to watch,” Lee said.

Although our Tigers and Head Coach Dabo Swinney had quite the impressive victory in Santa Clara, the efforts here in Clemson only added to the night. Without our unsung heroes and unwavering support, Clemson and its downtown scene would not be the same, and for that, I want to say thank you.



TOP 5 PLAYS OF THE 2019 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Colin Halm, Contributor

TREVOR LAWRENCE COMPLETES 62-YARD PASS TO TEE HIGGINS TO SET UP TOUCHDOWN

1

Although it was not a touchdown pass, this was Lawrence’s best pass all night. While Clemson’s defense was feasting on Tagovailoa’s mistakes with anticipating coverage, Lawrence was making Alabama pay for bringing a bland, recognizable coverage. On this particular pass, Lawrence dropped back to pass on a third-and-fourteen play. He knew he had wide receiver Higgins running up the middle of the field. What he noticed as he hit the top of his dropback was that the Alabama defense was dropping a safety over the middle of the field and then rotating a safety back. The issue for Alabama was that the rotating safety was on the far side of the field away from Higgins. Lawrence saw this and put a deep ball perfectly into Higgins’ hands at the Alabama 45-yard line. That’s about two seconds from when he first saw the coverage. After seeing that, Nick Saban should have thrown out the playbook and just blitzed all 11 guys from then on because nothing else was going to stop Lawrence and the Clemson offense anyway.

A.J. TERRELL PICKS OFF TUA TAGAVOILLOA AND RETURNS IT FOR TOUCHDOWN

2

There is not a more effective, tone-setting play than a pick-six on the opposing team’s first possession. Cornerback Terrell jumped what looked like a miscommunication between Tagovailoa and his receiver. The Clemson defense was set up to blitz Isaiah Simmons from the left side of the offense which meant that Terrell and safety K’Von Wallace were left in man-to-man coverage on the two receivers. One receiver ran up toward the defense and then out toward the sideline. The other looked like he would run a little further into the defense and then in toward the middle of the field, but he stopped midway. Tagovailoa threw the ball toward the second receiver running in, but instead of an Alabama player, he found Terrell who saw the pass go to the wrong player. It was a smart play that immediately shifted the momentum in Clemson’s favor.

TIGERS MAKE THIRD DOWN STOP ON THE GOAL LINE TO START THE SECOND QUARTER

3

This won’t make any of the highlight reels, but it’s definitely a top-tier play. The second quarter had just started and the Crimson Tide were third-and-goal from the three-yard line. Clemson was up by only one, after the Alabama kicker missed an extra point on their last score, but if the Tide had scored again they could have gone back up by seven with a two-point conversion. They tried to run a fake to the outside and pitch it back inside. Austin Bryant saw the quarterback scramble, but he hung around the line of scrimmage even though he could have gone for the sack. Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa threw a shovel pass and Bryant made the stop bringing up fourth down. This play halted what looked like a sure touchdown drive and forced Alabama to get just three points instead of a possible eight.

NYLES PINCKNEY BLOWS UP FAKE FIELD GOAL

4

What isn’t surprising is that Alabama tried a fake field goal while down two scores with less than a half of the game remaining. What is surprising is that they tried it when Clemson not only knew it was going to happen, but also didn’t even send out the field goal unit. The base defense was out there with four on the line and seven behind the line of scrimmage by at least four yards. Alabama tried to run it up the gut with the kicker as the lead blocker, but Pinckney got in there and made Alabama wish that they had called a timeout to reassess their play.

JUSTYN ROSS MAKES ONE-HANDED CATCH

5

Despite the fact that Ross is only a freshman, he makes plays like a senior. Two consecutive catches saw him tip a ball to himself and pull that ball out of the air with one hand as he fell toward the sideline. The key to this entire play was that, as he fell backward, he had the presence of mind to keep one foot in-bounds. It will remind some of a play that current New York Giant Odell Beckham Jr. made two years ago, yet Ross is just a freshman.